



RS Year 10 18th May 2005

Context

Religion and equality - work on the Christian response to prejudice. Areas considered include prejudice in response to racism, gender, religion, sexuality, etc.

Truth to Teach

1. Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.'
2. Christianity is the truth. Although other religions may hint at truth, they lead people away from God.
3. The 'Five Major World Faiths' have significant things to say about God, sin, salvation, man.
4. Constructive discussion can be had with those who hold other faiths

Way to Work

1. Ask questions about the exercise carried out on crossing cultural boundaries from last lesson.
2. Each to draw up a table with five columns headed: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Include a series of row headings: Book(s), Founder(s), God(s), Historical facts, Particular Beliefs.
3. Move around the group collecting information for each heading from those who have researched a particular faith for homework.
4. After this, ask questions to discover how well information has been shared around.
5. Provoke discussion by asking why all religions do not lead to God.
 - a. This could take the form of a debate, one person/group putting arguments together to support the idea, another to disagree.
 - b. Alternatively, discussion might arise spontaneously from questions that are asked. Turn the discussion back to others in the class by asking pupil B "Pupil A asked (whatever the question was). How would you answer?"
6. The appended sheet includes an article that could be read through in class, the phrase of significance being 'the issue then is not about who is arrogant or not but what is actually true and real?' (Reading through might involve colouring in, say, arguments for, against, conclusions, etc.) There is also a worksheet to help response to information collected from the group. Most of the sheet is background information not necessary for the pupils to read.
7. There is a summary puzzle to make. Facts about each faith are coloured with a particular colour, the pieces are cut out, stuck back to back, and then folded as shown. If correct all the colours come together and can be folded intriguingly.

Learning for Life

Pupils should be able to: -

- Starting with their personal faith:
 - begin to discuss how Christianity is unique among other religions, drawing from what they have learnt and experienced in their Christian lives;
 - be able to offer a defence of their faith;

- Where they are uncertain of their faith
 - they should be able to see an accessible summary of faiths in the context of discussion, opportunities to ask questions and to hear testimony from others;

- To disarm their own prejudice by considering what it might mean to live in a different world view.

Information and Worksheets

Do not All Religions Lead to God? www.zactrust.org/resources/articles.aspx

In twenty-first century Britain, we live in a context of spiritual longing. Many people are searching for that which will satisfy an inner craving for meaning and significance. The artist Damian Hirst who puts animals in Perspex boxes recently said this:

‘Why do I feel so important when I’m not? Nothing is important, and everything is important. I do not know why I am here, but I am glad that I am I’d rather be here than not. I am going to die, and I want to live forever, I can’t escape that fact, and I can’t let go of that desire.’

But somehow this does not always translate into people finding Christ and starting to follow Him. There is a dizzying array of options when it comes to religion and the culture around us says that they are all equally valid. It seems absolutely bizarre to people, that someone would say: ‘this one way is the truth and the only truth.’ The poet Steve Turner describes what most of our friends think about this brilliantly:

‘Jesus was a good man just like Buddha, Mohammed and ourselves. We believe He was a good teacher of morals, but we believe that His good morals are really bad. We believe that all religions are basically the same, at least the one we read was, they all believe in love and goodness, they only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God and salvation.’

In my experience there are usually two motivations in dismissing the idea that Christ is the only way to God and we need to be able to deal with them both.

The first objection

Is that it is arrogant to say that Jesus is the only way. How could we possibly be so arrogant as to say that all the other religions are wrong and Jesus is the only path to God?

Often at this point the parable of the elephant is used to illustrate how arrogant Christians are. It goes something like this:

‘There is an elephant and there are blind scribes touching different parts of the elephant. One is holding onto the tail and saying, ‘this is a rope’ another is holding the front leg of the elephant and saying, ‘no this is not a rope — you are wrong, it is a tree trunk’ another person is holding the trunk of the elephant and saying, ‘you are both wrong this is neither a rope nor a tree trunk it is a snake!’

The moral of the story is that all of the religions are like those men. They each touch a different part of Ultimate Reality and therefore Christians are arrogant to say that they have the truth.

Let us take a step back and think about what is being said here. Think about the two main differences between the person telling us the story and the people inside the story.

- The first difference is that the people touching the elephant are blind and the narrator can see.
- The second difference is one of perspective — the people inside the story are close up to the elephant but the narrator is standing back and has the full picture.

Do you see the breathtaking claim that is being made here? Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Moses and Muhammad are all blind, but I can see they all had a small perspective, but I can see the full picture — I can see that all of those ways actually lead to God.

The question now is ‘Who is arrogant?’ It is just as arrogant to say that ‘Buddha, Muhammad and Jesus were wrong in their exclusive claims,’ as it is to say ‘Jesus is the only way’ – the issue then is not about who is arrogant or not but what is actually true and real?

The second motivation

Or moral force behind this question is about exclusion.

How can you exclude all of these religions? Jesus said that He was the way to the Father but I cannot follow Him because I do not want to be an intolerant person who excludes others!

Again, we need to think carefully about this, because the reality is that whatever position we hold we exclude some views.

- Even the person who believes that all ways lead to God ... excludes the view that only some ways lead to God or only one way leads to God.
- In the same way the average person in Britain would probably want to exclude some of the extremists like Osama bin Laden and would believe that only some ways lead to God — perhaps the 5 main world religions.
- This excludes the view that all ways lead to God or that one way leads to God. And the Christian (who wants to say I follow Jesus, and He said that He was the only way to the Father) excludes the view that all ways or some ways lead to God.

Every view excludes some — so the issue is not who is excluding people but what is actually true and real.

Jesus said, ***'I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me.'*** There are a number of possibilities here.

- Perhaps He was a genuinely good person, but He was deluded. In other words, He was sincere but wrong — He believed He was God and misled people about this but in reality, He was mentally imbalanced.
- Or perhaps He knew He was not God but still went around telling people He was the only way to God — in which case He was a sinister character.
- Or perhaps He was who He said He was.

SUMMING UP MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN: -

MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS

Regarding God:

- Muslims believe there is no God but Allah; Christians believe that God is revealed in Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons who are coeternally God. **See Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14**

Regarding Jesus Christ:

- Muslims believe that Jesus was only a man, a prophet below Mohammed in importance, who did not die for man's sins; Christians say Christ is the Son of God, the sinless Redeemer who died and rose again for sinful man. **See John 1:13,14; 1 Peter 3:18**

Regarding sin:

- Muslims claim that humans are born with hearts that are clean slates. if they commit sins, these can be overcome by acts of the will; Christians counter that we are born corrupted by sin, spiritually dead apart from God's grace, and that no one does good apart from faith. (see Romans 3:12; Ephesians 5:8-10)

Regarding salvation:

- Muslims say that Allah does not love those who do wrong, and each person must earn his or her own salvation; Christians contend that a loving God sent His Son to die for our sins, according to the inspired Word. **See Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4**

HINDUS AND CHRISTIANS

Regarding God and Jesus Christ:

- Hindus do not believe in a personal, loving God, but in Brahma, a formless, abstract, eternal being without attributes, who was the beginning of all things. They believe that Jesus is not God but just one of many incarnations, or avatars, of V'shnu. Christians believe that God is an eternal, personal, spiritual Being in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **See Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14** Jesus Christ is God as well as sinless man and He died for our redemption. **See John 1: 13,14; 1 Peter 2:24**

Regarding sin and salvation:

- Hindus call sin 'utter illusion' because they believe all material reality is illusory. They seek deliverance from samsara, the endless cycle of death and rebirth, through union with Brahma, which is achieved through devotion, meditation, good works and self-control. Christians believe that sin is prideful rebellion that leads to eternal separation from God after living only one life, not many (see Romans 3:23; Hebrews 9:27) and that salvation is gained only through believing in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **See Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 15:3**

BUDDHISTS AND CHRISTIANS

Regarding God and Jesus Christ:

- Buddhists deny the existence of a personal God or say that God's existence is irrelevant;
- Christians say that God is personal, omniscient and omnipotent. **See Job 42:1-6; Psalm 1 1S:3; Matthew 19:26**
- Buddhists identify Christ as a good teacher but less important than Buddha;
- Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God who died for mankind's sin. **See Matthew 14:33; John 1:34; Romans 5:6-8**

Regarding Sin and Salvation:

- Buddhists believe that sin is the lust that arises in one's life, and they seek to rid themselves of lustful desires by self-effort or by calling on Bodhisattvas for help;
- Christians believe that sin is any thought, deed or desire contrary to God's will, and that salvation comes only through faith in what Christ has done for us. **See Acts 4:12; Romans 3:10, 23; Ephesians 2:8-10** Through faith and the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, God transforms our desires to be more and more in conformity with God's desires. **See Romans 12:1,2**

God's servant must not be argumentative, but a gentle listener and a teacher who keeps cool, working firmly but patiently with those who refuse to obey. You never know how or when God might sober them up with a change of heart and a turning to the truth, enabling them to escape the Devil's trap, where they are caught and held captive, forced to run his errands.

THE SIX DOCTRINES OF ISLAM

- God. There is only one true god and his name is Allah. Allah is all - seeing, all - knowing and all - powerful.
- Angels. The chief angel is Gabriel, who is said to have appeared to Mohammed. There is also a fallen angel named Shaitan (from the Hebrew 'Satan'), as well as the followers of Shaitan, the jinns (demons).
- Scripture. Muslims believe in four god-inspired books: the Torah of Moses (what Christians call the Pentateuch), the Zabur (Psalms of David), the Injil (Gospel) of Jesus, and the Quran. But, because Muslims believe that Jews and Christians corrupted their Scriptures, the Qur'an is Allah's final word to mankind. It supersedes and overrules all previous writings.
- Mohammed. The Qur'an lists 28 prophets of Allah. These include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah and Jesus. To the Muslim, the last and greatest prophet is Mohammed.
- The end times. On the "last day," the dead will be resurrected. Allah will be the judge, and each person will be sent to heaven or hell. Heaven is a place of sensual pleasure. Hell is for those who oppose Allah and his prophet Mohammed.
- Predestination. God has determined what he pleases, and no one can change what he has decreed (also known as kismet, the doctrine of fate). From this doctrine comes the most common Islamic phrase, "if it is Allah's Will."

THE FIVE PILLARS OF THE FAITH (duties)

- Statement of belief. To become a Muslim, a person must publicly repeat the Shahadah: “There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah.”
- Prayer. Muslims pray five times a day - at daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset, and early evening. The Muslim must kneel and bow in the prescribed manner in the direction of the holy city, Mecca.
- Alms. Muslim law today requires the believer to give one-fortieth of his profit (2.5 percent). This offering goes to widows, orphans, the sick and other unfortunates.
- Ramadan. The ninth month of the Islamic lunar year is called Ramadan and is the highest of Muslim holy seasons. Muslims are required to fast for the entire month. Food and drink, as well as smoking and sexual pleasures, are forbidden, but only during daylight hours. During Ramadan, many Muslims eat two meals a day, the first just before sunrise and the other shortly after sunset. During Ramadan, the believer must not commit any unworthy act. If he does, his fasting is meaningless.
- Pilgrimage to Mecca. This is called the Hajj and must be performed at least once in a Muslim’s lifetime. However, if the pilgrimage is too difficult or dangerous for the believer, he can send someone in his place.”

THE MIDDLE WAY AND THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

One of Buddha's most important teachings was his theory of the Middle Way. For Buddha, the Middle Way was a spiritual path of salvation, winding between the extreme asceticism and the unrestrained sensuality he had known while a Hindu. To describe his Middle Way, Buddha offered four main principles, which have come to be called the Four Noble Truths:

- Suffering is universal. Buddha taught that the very act of living involves suffering from birth until death. Even death brings no relief, however, because of the cycle of rebirth, suffering and death. Salvation (nirvana) is to be released from this unending cycle of suffering.
- The cause of suffering is craving (selfish desire). People remain in this endless cycle, because they are too attached to their health, wealth, status and physical comfort. This is because they are ignorant of the nature of reality and they fall victim to what Buddha called tanha (attachment, desire).
- The cure for suffering is to overcome ignorance and eliminate craving. Since to live is to suffer and suffering is caused by craving, if a person could remove craving from his or her life, suffering would end.
- Suppress craving by following the Middle Way - the Noble Eightfold Path. First, Buddha isolated the cause, tanha, humanity's inability to escape from the squirrel cage of death and rebirth. Next, he worked out a system called the Eightfold Path by which a Buddhist could rid himself of tanha. The Eightfold Path consists of eight ways of right living: (1) right viewpoint, (2) right aspiration, (3) right speech, (4) right behaviour, (5) right occupation, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness and (8) right meditation.

Buddha claimed that whoever could follow this Eightfold Path would eventually reach nirvana, a release from the endless cycle of death and rebirth. When Buddha was asked to define the state of nirvana, he replied that he had never tried to solve this question. His mission was to show man the way to escape the suffering of life, not to describe what he would find once he had been liberated.

The Hinduism that Buddha rejected said that life in this world is maya (illusion); thus, suffering, which is part of this world, is also illusion. Buddha, however, proclaimed that life in this world is quite real. It involves real suffering; because of this suffering, the world must be escaped by following Buddha's Eightfold Path.

Buddhism has always had great appeal for the peoples of the East. Unlike the elitist ideas of Hinduism, Buddhism offers a precise definition of man's problem, along with an exact "plan of salvation" for everyone.

Information and Worksheets

Do Not All Religions Lead to God?

1. Construct a glossary of words used in other faiths.

2. List two arguments people use for believing Christianity is not the only valid faith.

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3. How would a Christian answer these arguments?

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4. Use the information in these sheets to compile a quiz to identify some of the content of the five major faiths.

The Bare Essentials of

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/>

<p>Buddhism a tradition that focuses on personal spiritual development, Buddhists strive for a deep insight into the true nature of life and do not worship gods or deities.</p>	<p>Hinduism originated over 3000 years ago. It is not a single unified religion and has no founder, single teacher, nor prophets. Hindus believe in a universal soul or god called Brahman.</p>	<p>Islam ... began in Arabia and was revealed to humanity by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Those who follow Islam are called Muslims. Muslims believe that there is only one god, called Allah.</p>	<p>Judaism ... is around 3500 years old. Jews believe that there is only one God and that the Jewish People were specially chosen to receive God's guidance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2,500 years old ▪ 350 million Buddhists worldwide ▪ Founded by Siddhartha Gautama in India ▪ The path to Enlightenment or Buddhahood is through the practice and development of morality, meditation, and wisdom. ▪ Buddhists do not believe in a creator God nor a personal God, but Buddhists are tolerant of those whose beliefs are different from theirs. ▪ Buddhists believe that nothing is fixed or permanent — change is always possible. ▪ Buddhism teaches that all life is interconnected, so compassion is natural and important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hinduism is over 3000 years old, although elements of the faith are much older. ▪ No founder, single teacher, nor prophets. Not a single unified religion. ▪ Originated near the River Indus. ▪ Hindus believe in a universal soul or god called Brahman. ▪ There are many other deities such as Krishna, Shiva, Rama and Durga. ▪ Hindus believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, governed by Karma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Over 1300 years old. ▪ Began in Arabia ▪ Islam was revealed to humanity by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Muslims believe that there is only one god, called Allah ▪ Islam was revealed to humanity by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) ▪ The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was a human being, not a god. ▪ Muslims believe that Muhammad (pbuh) was the last prophet of God. The word Islam means surrender to God ▪ The Muslim scripture is the Holy Qur'an ▪ The Muslim building for communal worship is called a Mosque ▪ The five pillars of Islam help Muslims put their faith into action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3500 years old ▪ Began in the Middle East ▪ Founded by Abraham and Moses ▪ Parent faith of Christianity ▪ Jews believe that there is only one God ▪ Jews believe that the Jewish People are specially chosen by God ▪ Jews worship in Synagogues, their spiritual leaders are called Rabbis ▪ Jewish Holy book is the Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh, especially the first 5 books, called The Torah ▪ 12 million followers, most in Israel and the USA ▪ 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust in an attempt to wipe out Judaism

Hinduism is Not a Single Religion

Hinduism is not a term which identifies a single set of beliefs or ways of worship. Indeed, the word itself

does not appear in English until 1829.

Hinduism is the practices of a variety of different religious groups which come out of India.

Origins

Hinduism developed from the religious practices of those who lived near the River Indus in modern day Pakistan.

However, Hinduism has been, and continues to be, influenced by the traditions, stories and practices of

people from other parts of India and beyond.

The Nature of God

Hindus believe in the universal soul (Brahman), as the sole reality who is present in all things.

Brahman has no form and is eternal.

Brahman is creator, preserver and transformer of everything.

Brahman appears in the human spirit as atman, or the soul.

What About All Those Hindu gods?

It is often believed that Hindus worship many gods, but in fact, many Hindus would claim to believe in one

eternal god (Brahman) which is indefinable, whilst revering other deities.

They recognise the other gods as different aspects of the Brahman.

Karma

Karma is central to the Hindu faith.

Information and Worksheets

Hindus believe that the soul passes through a cycle of successive lives and its next incarnation is always dependent on how the previous life was lived.

So, if you behave badly in this life, your next incarnation is likely to be more unpleasant than your current one—you reap what you sow.

The Three Religious Paths

The Hindu religion recognises many religious paths, three of which are:

The path of knowledge (jnana).

The path of work and religious performances (karma).

The path of devotion (bhakti).

Origins

Islam was revealed to humanity through the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) during the 7th CE, in Arabia, and spread rapidly through the Middle East.

Although Islam was not fully revealed to us until the 7th century, Muslims believe that it has always existed.

Everything belongs to God



The word Islam means submission to Allah (God) and Muslims believe that everything in life should be at the service of Allah.

As a result, Muslims find it hard to accept the distinction that Western cultures make between a person's religious life and the rest of their life.

Muslims think such a distinction is entirely wrong. They believe that not only individuals, but also the institutions of society should serve Allah.

Muslims submit to Allah by obeying his commands, and by living their whole lives in a way that is pleasing to Allah.

Muslims combine faith and action in everything they do: they regard belief on its own, or good deeds on their own, as pointless.

The 5 Pillars of Islam

These are the five obligations that every Muslim must satisfy in order to live a good and responsible life according to Islam.

Scripture

The Islamic scripture is the Holy Qur'an.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an was revealed to humanity by God through the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They believe the Qur'an is a perfect copy of a text that exists eternally in heaven.

Worship

The place for communal Muslim worship is called a Mosque.

Muslims are required to pray 5 times a day, and although this need not be at a mosque, it must be done according to precisely laid down rules.

Muslims do not regard this requirement for ritual prayer as in any way burdensome but rejoice in the opportunity to do God's bidding.

Muslim Groupings

There are several different groups of Muslims, but all of them, in every country and community, regard their faith as a bond between them, and as a major part of their identity.

Sufi Muslims are more interested in the mystical aspect of religion. They are focused on a desire to know God and have a relationship with Him.

The largest Muslim group consists of Sunni Muslims who make up 90% of the world's Muslims.

The other main group is the Shi'ite Muslims, who are particularly strong in Iran.